

# G O L F

*By William Garrott Brown*

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**William Garrett Brown**

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## GOLF

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**T**HREE new things have come into our American life in recent years. All three have seemed to come suddenly, but all three have affected very notably the daily walk and conversation of such Americans as one ordinarily has in mind when one says "we" or "us." One of them, perhaps two, will sooner or later take hold also of that larger body of Americans which is not supposed to have much of thought or feeling in common with "us." As yet, however, the new impulses do not seem to have quivered

through the Siamese bond of flesh which ties us to our other half.

But bring together anywhere a company of reasonably alert and reasonably well-to-do Americans, and the chances are their talk will shortly concern itself with one of three subjects which ten years ago would have gone unmentioned. They will talk of money, perhaps — but not as the Americans of Dickens's time talked of money. Money considered as an object of individual aspiration they will with one accord decry and deprecate ; even trade will be euphemized into a career. It is money as a social and economic force, money massed in billions and warring with other

billions, which they will permit themselves to discuss. Or they will talk of things military and naval and diplomatic; of colonies and races, and the exhumed East, and England's foreboded decadence, and our own emergence as a world power. Or, — they will talk of golf. Empire, trusts, and golf: these are the new things in American life. From domestic cares we have faced about to world-wide enterprises; from an extreme of individualism and industrial competition we have turned to a marvelous development of coöperation and combination; from our passionate absorption in work we have somehow passed into an equally passionate absorption in play.

Now, of these three new things, but one, the trust, is a genuinely American growth. For that reason, there seems to be little doubt that our industrial reorganization is for good and all ; at any rate, there is little likelihood of our going backward, even though it should transpire that our present stage is transitional merely. It is a new thing for the world, not for us only, and we have been the pioneers in it. But empire and golf are old, though to us they are new. Even with us, so rapidly do we exhaust a subject, their first newness is already worn off. Accordingly, one hears it said that they will go as they came; that we acquired them both imitatively, and



not because of any real liking for them. The one is by many thought to be inconsistent with all our past, and contrary to the very genius of our political life; the other, ill suited to our climate and to our quick and lively temper. The Supreme Court set itself to answer the doubt about American imperialism, but neglected golf. Let us be judicial for ourselves.

And in truth there is need of some judicial restraint, particularly if one has friends of two classes: of the class that never did play golf, and are proud of it; and of the class that began to play it, and have now gone back to tennis or — croquet. Neither class is numerically impor-

tant, but both contrive to be exceedingly disagreeable at times. Of the two, the class that has given up golf is the more depressing to one who has not given it up and has no mind to, but is himself conscious at times that the pleasure it yields him is by so much lessened as it is now fathomed and measured, and no longer, as it was for a time, a delightful expectancy. To have found completely one's own limitations as a golfer is to have found a limitation in golf itself; and that is one of the analogies to life in which the game abounds. This, however, is a very different thing from that complete reaction from a spent enthusiasm which they who have

abandoned golf are afflicted with and afflict their more steadfast friends with. I speak not now — and perhaps I ought not ever to speak, for I should never speak within bounds — of such as not merely began to play golf, but kept on playing it, from no enthusiasm whatever, but only because it was the fashion. Kept on, I say; for none of us but is frail enough to do things now and then because they are the fashion. But the man who has actually learned to play, and played, and had still no other mind in playing than to be in the fashion and occupied according to the mode, and never once found himself playing for playing's sake, — that man

should be a butler, a hired mourner at funerals. His point of view is like the attendant's at a Turkish bath, who protested, in the way of business, that he was always mighty particular about "his" hands, — meaning the hands of his patrons.

No, I mean the men who have played golf because they liked it, and some of them even played it well, and who play it now no more, or rarely. They are few, but they put us under a necessity, before we predict for golf a permanently important place among our sports, to compare its vogue here with that of other imported games, — with that of tennis, for example, and with the sporadic popularity of cricket.

The beginnings of American lawn tennis are not so far away but that one can recall the time when to board a public conveyance or walk along a crowded thoroughfare with a racket in one's hand was to draw upon one's self the same curious glances, and perhaps the same irreverent remarks from street urchins, which a caddie bag will still sometimes provoke. It cannot be more than twelve years since I found the youth of a country town east of the Mississippi in heated debate over the question whether flannels or knickerbockers were the proper "uniform" for their tennis club. Tennis, however, was firmly established as an American sport before

golf came, and it has swiftly emerged from the eclipse it then passed into. English cracks have striven in vain for our American championship, and picked English teams have been beaten in two series of contests for an international trophy. Good judges, in fact, incline to the opinion that quite recently the game has progressed faster on this side than on the other, and that our best men are now fully the equals of the best over there. Cricket, on the other hand, is clearly unable to make its way here. Save among people of English or Canadian birth, or in communities proverbially free from haste, it does not flourish and never will. Schoolboys do not take it up



of their own motion. The history of the two sports would seem to show that no considerable body of Americans are likely to pursue, for the mere purpose of imitation, a sport in which they neither attain excellence nor find a genuine and unstrained pleasure. That is all tennis and cricket have to tell us of the future of golf in America.

The history of golf in England does not help us, for in the matter of its foreign origin and the imitative character of its beginnings our English cousins are in much the same case with us. Until well into the eighties, golf among sports had no higher standing south of the Tweed than oatmeal had in Dr.

Johnson's time among foods. The advisability of giving it space in the Badminton books in 1890 was seriously questioned, and Mr. Horace Hutchinson is authority for the statement that its earliest vogue was in no small measure attributable to the circumstance of Mr. Balfour's prominence in public life, and the undue attention which was drawn to his two extraordinary diversions of golf and theology. When clubs began to be formed, professional teachers were imported from Scotland, and for years the open championship seemed to Englishmen as remote and unattainable a height as our own open championship still seems to native Americans. The

victory, in 1890, of Mr. John Ball, Jr., Englishman and amateur, was so great a surprise that Scotchmen refused to take it for anything but an accident. Taylor, an English professional, won in 1893, and his caddie, now a well-known professional in this country, tells with glee a story of the victor's successful encounter, conducted under the rules of a good old English sport, more popular in the eighteenth century than in this, with several astounded and irate Scotchmen who awaited him on the eighteenth green. For England, as for America, St. Andrews is still the source of golfing law and precedent. There, as here, it is impossible to forecast

the future of the game from any adequate test of time. But it should be added that the English do not suspect themselves of such inconstancy to any sport they have once found good as they who predict the decline of golf here must suppose us capable of.

Its persistence here depends on the answers to two questions : Can we play it well ? Do we genuinely like it ? Individually, some of us may find the two questions merging into one, and if golf were like other games a negative answer to the first would imply the same for the other. Each of us, on finding he could play something else better, would promptly relinquish golf. And col-

lectively we are of such a temper that it is hard to conceive of our playing year after year a game which, whether because we play it in America or because we are Americans, we never could learn to play so well as other peoples. We set too much store by excellence, as well as success, for that.

But the first question must not be answered in the negative. Mr. Travis, a stranger to the game until he was nearing thirty, self-taught, has made himself the equal of amateurs trained from childhood on the best courses and in the best traditions of Scotland, and even of professionals but little below the first rank. The meetings of the national

association last autumn, at Atlantic City and at Baltusrol, showed such an improvement within the year of the standard of play both for women and for men as none of us had expected. The prominence of players still in their teens, at these and other important meetings of the season, was particularly notable. As yet, there has been no such opportunity as in tennis to compare a group of our best players with men like Mr. Hilton and Mr. Ball and the lamented Tait, and Mr. Travis's tour of the English and Scottish courses was hardly a fair test of his prowess ; for he was playing too constantly, and nowhere near the top of his form. Competent ob-



servers tell us that the standard of amateur play is still appreciably higher on the other side, and it is probably true that in golf, as in rowing, the very highest skill will rarely be attained through any course of training that begins after childhood. Nevertheless, there is every reason to believe that the generation now in school and college will have representatives on the links, say ten years from the present time, quite as competent to defend our championship from invading Britons as their fellows are already proving themselves on the tennis courts. Florida and California compensate us somewhat for the milder winters and summers and the

longer twilights of the British Isles, though none of our soils presents the firm, velvety turf, and none of our climates permits the freedom with decanters, which the Britons enjoy. That the effect of our climate, or of anything else peculiarly American, upon our muscles and nerves, unfits us for good play, is scarcely believable by any one who from experience knows the value in golf of that very American dash and *verve* and disposition to play better than one knows how which so markedly differentiates our tennis from theirs. In match play, at least, whatever may be said of medal play, and however little a mere observer may suspect it, cold-blooded-

ness is quite as apt to prove a weakness as a safeguard. We need to master our ardors, not to quench them.

There is but one reasonable source of uneasiness. Our tennis cracks have shown a tendency to retire earlier in life than is the wont of English players, and should our golfers do likewise the standard of play will be affected more than in tennis ; for golfers do not reach their prime so soon as tennis players, or begin so soon to decline. Youth is not nearly so essential to excellence in golf as in most other sports. The best of the professionals are over thirty.

On that score, however, the his-

tory of American golf, brief as it is, and particularly of its first beginnings, is reassuring. It was not the schoolboys, nor yet the college athletes, who introduced it among us, as they did tennis and football. On the contrary, college professors were playing it before the first student team was formed, and long before Yale, Harvard or Princeton gave it a place in the lengthening list of their competitions. In fact, it got its first chance in America because it seemed to be a game which men no longer young might hope to play with a measure of skill. Affected, therefore, by grown-up people of leisure, it was at once associated with wealth and with

“society” as it has not been abroad, where it has not been considered distinctively a rich man’s game. If it had broken out among the school-boys instead of their fathers, probably our clubhouses would have been comparatively unimportant appendages of the links, as in Scotland ; but in this respect the rise of country clubs and the general awakening to the pleasures of the country also had their effect. Even in America, however, the game has now a far wider popularity than it could have so long as wealth was necessary to the enjoyment of it. Many large cities have their public links ; towns and small cities have their nine-hole courses ; there are

hundreds of clubs whose dues are within the reach of all but the slenderest purses. In the metropolitan districts, one is apt to find that the clubs whose representatives figure the most creditably in open competitions are content with unpretentious clubhouses, and devote their income chiefly to the up-keep of their courses. Wherever golf is played for its own sake, the feeling against extravagance, and particularly against anything like display in dress, is apt to be strong. The man in the ornate cardigan jacket, with the silver-mounted caddie bag, is not dreaded on the links, nor does his splendor arouse any envy on the clubhouse piazza. We



seem to be rid of the people who thought they found in golf a new sartorial opportunity.

These departed to other costumes and poses, and with them all who never got beyond a mimetic delight in golf, and the few also who took their golf aright, but not deep enough: there abide on the links a host of players whom the peculiar merits of the game, now no longer heightened by the charm of novelty or subtly commended by the fashion, continue to attract and hold.

Its merits, its points of superiority to baseball, tennis, cricket, and other of the infinite number of games built up from the simple primary exercise of hitting a ball with

a club, are to be sought in two directions. There are the demands it makes upon its votaries, and the compensations it renders them in return. True, the only way to enjoy golf is to play it, — except, perhaps, to rest after, and talk of it. Nevertheless, the play is not play alone, but work and play, give and receive, object and subject, achievement and contemplation, as no other playing but life itself is. Let me see if I cannot make plain what I mean, and why golfers do actually find golf, *qua* game, not merely superior to all other games, but different from them all in a kind and degree of difference quite unlike their differences from each other.

The differences most susceptible of enumeration and analysis are in the matter of the demands it makes. From the variety of the situations it presents, there arises a constant demand upon the player's intelligence ; from the unequaled importance of delicate adjustments, and the heavy penalties imposed upon very slight errors, there arises a constant demand upon his self-control ; and it makes a quite peculiar demand upon his conscience by reason of the clearness with which its standard of excellence is defined.

True, there is a point of view from which it may be regarded as an extremely simple game, — the very simplest of all the games with

a ball and a club. The player's object is simple and single to the point of simple-mindedness and singularity, one might say : to put a small ball in a small hole with the fewest possible strokes. But so are the objects of the highest ambitions, the guiding stars of careers the most perplexed and devious. It is true, likewise, that all the countless strokes a golfer makes are resolvable into three kinds of stroke, — driving, approaching, and putting. But Mr. Everard, in a dictum unsurpassed for truth and brilliancy by any in all the extremely clever literature of golf, has declared that to make those three strokes aright one must have “ art, science, and inspi-

ration." From the moment the ball leaves the tee, whether it be topped, pulled, or sliced, or whether, struck in proper fashion a trifle below the medial line, and urged forward with an exquisite, free lashing out of the wrists, it take flight as with wings, and seek its true course as with a mind and purpose of its own, until it drop into the cup with a tintinnabulation that no louder clang or pæan ever surpassed in its suggestion of victory and consummation, there is no foreseeing what perplexity or temptation to carelessness or overconfidence it will present. Not twice, off the tee ground and the putting green, will the possibilities and probabilities of the

stroke be quite the same. In the lie, the wind, the distance to be traversed, the obstacles to be carried, there are variations not to be reckoned by any known mathematics. The state and prospects of the match, the situation in reference to the hole, — as, for instance, whether one is playing the odd, or the like, or perhaps the comfortable and beguiling one off two, — and the measure of one's superiority or inferiority to one's opponent, and one's own state of self-command and confidence, or rage, or blank despondency, must all help to determine how that particular stroke shall be played. For into each stroke there must go not merely the

thought of the stroke itself, and all its parts, and of all the material conditions of it, but the thought of one's self and of one's adversary. If the match be a foursome, one's responsibilities are not halved, but doubled. If a mixed foursome, they are multiplied by as many fold as the thought of one's partner outweighs all thought of self. *Then*, as the match approaches its dreadfully quiet climax of defeat or victory, the responsibility may grow positively appalling. The very deliberation which, impossible in most games, is characteristic of this, so far from lessening the strain on one's nerves, undoubtedly heightens it. One has time to estimate the emer-

gency, to realize the crisis. Not the fiercest rally at tennis, not the longest and timeliest home run at baseball, not the most heroic rush at football, requires a more rigid concentration of thought and energy, or more of the lover's courage, than the flick of the putter that sends the ball crawling on its last little journey across the putting green, when the putt is for the hole and the hole means the match. There is not a quality of mind or body,— I will not except or qualify at all, — no, not one, that life itself proves excellent, which a circuit of the links will not test.

The like is true of those moral qualities which all games more or



less shrewdly test. In fairness, for example, there is no such discipline in any other game, because no other game offers so constantly or so devilishly the temptation to be unfair. The rules are many and easy to misinterpret, and in ordinary matches, when there are no on-lookers, the player is often at liberty to give himself the benefit of the doubt. To alter the lie for the better, to ground one's club in a hazard, to miscount one's strokes, —these are the ranker and grosser offenses, which only the self-admitted cad is in danger of committing. The lesser sins, for better men, are countless. Not infrequently, to state the case to your

opponent is merely to let him give you the benefit of the doubt, which your own conscience tells you should go to him. Cheating is so difficult to prove, and bringing the detected culprit to book is so thankless a task, that he will oftenest go unpunished, until, if he do not mend his ways, he is somehow gradually made aware that he is fallen into disfavor with his fellows. Indeed, for this very reason, it is hard to see how any but honest players have any pleasure in the game; for the dishonest cannot win even that low conceit of superior cleverness which they do seem to get from sharp practices at other games, as in business. The lighter virtues of good

temper, patience, and courtesy are scarcely less essential than the sterner. Without them it is hard to play well, and impossible to play with enjoyment.

But there is yet another way in which golf tries a man's moral strength ; and this is the respect in which the analogy of the game to life is most remarkable, — in which it is nothing less than profound. There is fixed, for every links, with an accuracy and preciseness possible in no other game I know of, a standard of good play. I mean the Bogey score. There is no such standard in tennis, baseball, cricket: in these, one can measure the excellence of one's own play,

and estimate one's progress or decline, but vaguely, or against a particular opponent's, which is as variable as one's own. In golf, one can play alone against Bogey, and even in matches one has the Bogey score, and record scores, and one's own former scores, in mind. Striving to do better than one's opponent is common to all games; striving to do well without regard to one's opponent, and with a perfectly clear understanding of what is good, bad, and indifferent, is quite another thing. The duffer, making his patient, solitary round, outlawed by the rules, a mark for the ridicule of clever writers, stands, nevertheless, for that in golf which no other

game can boast, — a clear though to him unattainable ideal.

But the thing is deeper than that. The Bogey score for the whole course, if that were all, would be like those very noble, but not practical or intimate, broad plans of life which high-minded youth sets up for the stress of manhood and the failing powers of age. It would not with sufficient urgency make itself a part of every specific effort. Bogey, however, like an actual opponent, competes with us for every hole; at each, with perfect justice, he declines to profit by good luck. He will not count it if he hole his approach; he never lucks a putt. But neither does his approach over-

run, and his second putt always goes down. There is a standard of excellence for specific tasks. Nay — more : with every single stroke we assail an ideal. There is no taking refuge in a breath-saving lob, as in tennis. Wherever and however the ball may lie, there is a certain right way to play it, a certain reasonable hope in the stroke, from which we may be tempted by overconfidence and an adventurous trust in luck, or frightened by too low an estimate of our own powers. The ideal of golf, the moral law of golf, is thus, throughout, the ideal and the moral law of life : similarly persistent, silent, inescapable. A golfer's mistakes, his individual mis-

judgments, slices, pulls, fozzles, are sins, — nothing less; he will writhe under them ere he sleeps.

True, of each according to his strength it is demanded. There is, of course, one's handicap. But the consolation of a handicap is precisely such as it yields in the greater game, and no more. In both alike, to be quite consoled with it is despicable; to refuse altogether to be consoled with it is to reject philosophy; to strive on, either desperately or sweetly, to the end of doing without it, to the attainment of a positive, non-relative excellence, is the right virtue and heroism. The principle of the handicap is always an admirable one, and it

is illustrated in golf as in no other game; for in no other, probably, does one's play so vary from day to day, in no other is there such need of patience under discouragement or of restraint in good fortune. To aim at a high average of performance, and not to be overmindful either of temporary fallings off or streaks of brilliancy, is the principle turned into rule. Does life enforce another so wise, so practical, or so fine?

If it does, then it is the rule of self-study, and that, too, is a rule of golf, commended by like rewards, enforced by penalties as logical and as sure. This is the demand of golf that is oftenest discussed in the



treatises, and set forth with the greatest fullness of illustration and analysis. But the true nature of it, the extent and limit of it, the little more and the little less of it, is best made plain, I fancy, only by persisting with this same analogy to life which already, no doubt, is growing tiresome. For the line between the self-study which is needful and the self-consciousness which is fatal is precisely the same in both. You discover, let us say, that the position of your left foot in driving is wrong, and by practice ascertain that you should set it thus, and not so. Nothing, surely, can be simpler; you will thenceforth avoid the error, and slice or pull no

more. But it is not merely necessary to place that left foot properly: it is necessary to leave it there, to withdraw your mind from it, to redistribute your attention, or will, or whatever may be the right term, throughout all the parts of your anatomy. A hang, a catch, a snap o' the lid, and you are snared. That left foot will not down. At every stroke it will offend you. It is no longer yours, but is become a foreign and an alien thing. It rises up and kicks you. It shall be set upon your neck. Rebellion and civil war is let loose within your state. Conquer it you may, but you know not when it will grow again outrageous. You are cursed with a

besetting sin, and in the time of stress it will find you out. Henceforth, only by a constant watching and willing can you doubtfully maintain your poise between the outward and the inward thought, and precariously regain the wholeness you have lost.

“Wholeness” is the word. Try it, if it do not best express your achievement, physical and psychological, the thing and the sense of it, when you have made a stroke aright. Or try it, even, with the dream, the maddening vision of the stroke, which will surely visit you, though the thing itself you never once attain. To take apart, and then to put together again, — “all

the king's horses and all the king's men" will not help you with the task. Envisage it however you may, consult about it with whomsoever you choose, it will baffle you still with its mystery of many in one, until once, and by a single, clear, heroic effort of your will, you do achieve it, and then your business is at every stroke to recall and repeat that effort, clear and single, as before, until by repetition it shall grow both familiar and easy, until each member and nerve shall sweetlier and sweetlier obey upon the instant and range harmonious at your call. That is golf, or I am not an honest duffer. It is life, or I have never summoned forth the

turbulent, dismembered host of mine own powers, and strained them out to the great compass of a deed. Ponder it: a cosmology unfolds.

But this is growing a trifle serious. Our friend who has never played golf is getting disgusted again. Our other friend who has given over playing is blankly mystified. Even among us, the faithful, there be some disquieted. Let us face about, ere we amplify too much the active principle, the demands, of golf, and regain our composure with the thought of what it gives us. Nevertheless, what it asks is oftener than what it gives the secret of its hold on us, as giving is oftener than receiving the secret of any love.

The mere bodily delights of it are not to be hastened over when we take account of its compensations. If it be true, as many will no doubt incline to think, that the best criterion of any exercise is the number of one's bodily parts which it involves, then it would be hard to find any superior to the full St. Andrews swing. I know nothing comparable to it for bringing one acquainted with one's body, for the reassuring sense it gives of power and vitality. Swimming is perhaps likest it in that respect. Rowing is less free. Tennis neglects an arm and a side. Baseball and football distribute the exertion less equally. None of these permit the deliberation essential to

a full realization and enjoyment of one's energy. In no other exercise which is also sport are grace and dignity so constantly possible as in golf; and in none is the repetition of the movement less apt to grow wearing and monotonous.

The sense of effectiveness, of competence, in a proper stroke, is also, to my mind, unparalleled. A great and complicated activity is centred upon an object exceptionally definite. Force, gathered from all one's sources, tempered and restrained with all one's balance, ordered and directed with one's utmost of precision, poured out, as it were, through one's arms and hands and finger tips, projected along the

slender shaft into the head of the club, and lovingly imparted to the ball, is on the instant, and before one's eyes, transmuted into a form of motion unrivaled for its likeness to animation. It is creative work. One breathes the breath of life into the thing. One begets and fathers. Even when one fails, there is always the sense of power misdirected, the leaping conception of the next stroke, which shall make amends. Mr. Arnold Haultain, who by common consent is entitled to the distinction of having come the nearest to putting it all into words, and so written the Recessional of golf's jubilee, places a due emphasis on that persistency of the golfer's hope.



The unconquerable in us is nohow else so incomprehensibly manifest in the little.

The pleasing sense of one's own physical parts is paralleled by the feeling for and of the implements of the play. The love of the golfer for his favorite clubs passes the love of the cricketer or the baseball player for his bat, of the tennis player for his racket; the huntsman's feeling for his gun approaches it more nearly. Now, the inanimate things we take in our hands are by no means insignificant among the inducements of our moods. To be well fitted in our clothes and our canes, to be sweetly affected by whatever object we are brought in

physical contact with, is important beyond our ordinary estimate of such "accidentals." The furniture of our rooms is very really the furniture of our minds, and our raiment does not clothe our backs alone. The golfer's clubs are often a delight quite apart from their uses in the game. Not one of us but has spent hours in mere idle addressing and wigwagging and swinging — often, perhaps, at some expense of glassware — with a driver whose several qualities of weight and balance and "whippiness" have been rightly adjusted to the physical personality of its master. For indulgence in such a gustation of one's clubs, rooms void of chandeliers are

to be recommended. Mine were once fitted with electrical bulbs; they burst with a rather startling pop, and my recollection is, they cost fifty cents apiece.

If, in respect of the sense it gives of one's body and of one's clubs, golf is at least the equal of other sports, it is, I think, clearly the superior of any other I know in the matter of the relation into which it brings one with one's fellow player, whether as partner or as opponent. A principal distinction is that there is no direct opposition of force to force or of skill to skill in the rivalry it involves. Save the stymie, there is no occasion when another's play can affect one's own otherwise than

morally. Your opponent is never guilty of your cuppy lies ; you are never irritated by a direct antagonism, or humiliated by the necessity of yielding to greater physical strength, or tempted to a mean exaltation. It is all of the quality of well-bred argumentation over an impersonal theme. Moreover, the longish intervals between the strokes permit, or rather demand, conversation, which is so seldom possible in games, and the play itself, like a lawyer's brief, is an unfailing conversational resource. The strokes, on the other hand, like the puffs of a smoker, like a woman's crocheting, are capital pause-makers. The opportunities for courteous inter-

changes, for the shading of compliments and condolences, are many and constant. The very pace one falls into is conducive to companionship. It is certainly easier to talk with one's competitor on the links than with one's companion when one walks for walking's and talking's sake. I am inclined, in fact, to set a match at golf above any other known method of beginning an acquaintance. True, there are always the byes after the match is lost, or the difficult fifty yards from the last hole, where the putt went wrong, to the clubhouse ; but one has usually a chance, brisk from one's tub, and restored to good-humor, to redeem one's self, and

win the best part of any match, with a jest or a confession or an appreciation, over the Scotch or the tea. The number of such acquaintances that ripen into good-fellowship and friendliness, or even into friendship, must be very great. One of our veterans tells me that the very best thing he wins are not the cups and medals, but friends. If what I have said is true of the thoroughness with which golf tests character, the connection between that demand of it and this compensation needs no elaboration.

After all, however, golf is most rightly considered as one method of returning to nature, and the most reasonable criterion of golf as

recreation is the mood and attitude in which it brings one in touch with nature. Probably the great majority of its votaries find in a fresh concern about nature the principal constant effect of it in themselves.

Though we must concede it accidental, the requirements of the game are ordinarily very much at one with the demands of good taste and an artistic sense in the matter of the choice and laying out of a course. No doubt, courses have often been chosen merely for the reason that they were beautiful ; but it is true likewise that in any given region the most attractive square mile or more is very apt to prove the best for a links. Every

good links must have firm green turf underfoot; it must have vistas; it is better for swells and undulations; variety is essential. In but one respect, and there only superficially, is the artistic sense antagonized; trees are banned from the fair green. They are the worst hazards conceivable, because the most illogical and unjust. The loss, however, is hardly real. Proverbially, the greatest hindrance to the enjoyment of trees is other trees. The last place in the world to go to find trees beautiful is into the heart of the densest wood. Better even this Texas prairie, where I happen to be writing now, treeless, and bare as yet of its richly embroidered mantle



of spring wild flowers, — where people remember their childhood homes in Eastern states most tenderly as tree-clad places, and will always have trees in their pictures, and long backward for them as for no other delight they have left behind. To see trees, one must have at least a clearing, and the lake-like interval of an inland course, or the shore margin if it be seaside links, is often the best point of view conceivable. For the finest effect of trees, whether they mass in walls and make a skyline or stand apart, singly majestic, is rather architectural than domestic. Who cares for the underside of leaves? A high love would no more invade a tree than a cloud.

Mystery is as much a part of its charm as silence is. It should wave before us, come athwart our vision, menace, invite, suggest, lift up our thought, — all of which is its function on the border of the course, or crowning the hill near the clubhouse, or sentinelning the drive. If the reader, not yet a golfer, find this far-fetched and fanciful, let me assure him, quite seriously, that golf has helped the present writer to develop a taste for Corot.

That, perhaps, will make it easier for him to bear with me while I add that golf may likewise awaken one to a sense of the beauty of wild flowers, and many another delicate loveliness in nature. I have known

the note of a song-sparrow to arrest a stroke. As for the larger appeals which nature makes to us, the sky-lines, the sunsets, the fresh green of the landscape in spring and autumn's red and leafy splendors, I should but hurt my cause by too much protesting were I to attempt to explain how, after years of a mere casement acquaintance with these things, of a laborious and creak-kneed homage, the habit of golf has gradually made me truly aware of them, and of my rights in them and theirs in me. It is a matter of moods, I suppose, and golf permits and induces moods scarcely conceivable in other athletic competitions. It permits one to

be contemplative. One can actually play it dreamily. That, in fact, is a mood I should recommend in driving to any one who affects the full swing, if his style be naturally slow, and grace not clearly beyond him.

Fairness, however, demands a certain qualification here, a concession of fact. The severity and the frequent sudden changes common to most of our American climates, and particularly the extreme clearness of our atmosphere, do somewhat lessen for us the golfer's peculiar privilege of a contemplative delight in nature, and prevent or disturb his characteristic mood. The tendency of these things is to induce an eager, high-strung, and

even feverish responsiveness rather than serene enjoyment. That temper, though it be, as I have said, not on the whole detrimental to our play in respect of skill, does probably incapacitate us at times for the fullest measure of the delight we might have in it. Even if it does, however, there would seem to be better rather than worse reason for us to play. Serenity and tranquillity are in truth the very moods which Americans of the classes that play golf need to cultivate. To such as criticise the game because it is slow, and takes more time than busy, effective men can afford to give it, my favorite answer is that this is just what makes it so good a

recreation for Americans, and particularly for the very Americans who, because they are so busy and hurried, will not take time for it, but prefer instead some sort of rapid transit through their diversions, and would have their relaxation without relaxing, and bolt their nature like their luncheons. They are men who do not know how to stroll. One of my friends was of these, and he used to exasperate me greatly. Slight, high-strung, all nerves and energy and alertness to opportunity, he could not for the life of him move over the course at any fixed and deliberate pace; he could not, in fact, *walk* at all, but would alternate from lingering,

leashed by courtesy, at the side of his partner, to bounding after his ball. If through golf such Americans shall come, as my friend has, into the practice of a pace that is neither hasting nor delaying, it will prove not the least valuable part of the education of our masters.

For I go back to the point where I began, to make sure of not being thought to jest when I was in fact most serious. That cruelly overtasked individual, the future historian, if he should ever come to know our life one tithe as well as we do, and if he should have a right sense of values in civilization and a keen eye to the sources of national character, will not rate golf,

if it survive and continue to spread among us, as the least of the three new things which came with the end of the century. In his bird's eye view of us, he will not neglect the red-coated throngs which every holiday emerge from our great, throbbing cities, any more than he will neglect the marks of our material enterprise on the surface of the continent, and the network of our highways, or fail to pursue the fleets and armies invading for us the lands we shall peacefully or violently conquer. He will note of us, as of the Romans and other conquerors, that in the very years when we took upon us the imperial tasks of older peoples we borrowed of them also



their arts and their pleasures. It needs but a schoolboy's reflection on what came of the Romans' imitative self-indulgence to make us thankful that from our cousins of England and Scotland, our fore-runners in sports as in empire, we can learn so much concerning the right spirit in both. That we should continue on this continent to play the same manly, healthful games they play on the little island, pursuing always in our golf, with a just balance between eagerness and sedateness, between overconfidence and despondency, its clear ideal of excellence, displaying the heroism of wholeness, and sweetening our natures with that fine, right sense

of the human and wild nature about us which it so subtly quickens,—this is no little aspiration, even beside our other aspiration to the right spirit in those vaster occupations which seem to be devolving from Englishmen, weary of the perplexities of empire, upon us, whom at last it visits in its westward course.



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